

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 KUWAIT 002417

SIPDIS

STATE ALSO PASS USAID/W
STATE PLEASE REPEAT TO IO COLLECTIVE
STATE FOR PRM/ANE, EUR/SE, NEA/NGA, IO AND SA/PAB
NSC FOR EABRAMS, SMCCORMICK, STAHIR-KHELI, JDWORKEN
USAID FOR USAID/A, DCHA/AA, DCHA/RMT, DCHA/FFP
USAID FOR DCHA/OTI, DCHA/DG, ANE/AA
USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA:WGARVELINK, BMCCONNELL, KFARNSWORTH
USAID FOR ANE/AA:WCHAMBERLIN
ROME FOR FODAG
GENEVA FOR RMA AND NKYLOH
DOHA FOR MSHIRLEY
ANKARA FOR AMB WRPEARSON, ECON AJSIROTI AND DART
AMMAN FOR USAID AND DART

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [IZ](#) [WFP](#)

SUBJECT: DART WESTERN IRAQ UPDATE

SUMMARY

1. Following multiple trouble-shooting visits with WFP and Ministry of Trade teams in the upper south region of Iraq, the DART Field Team West Food Officer believes the public distribution system is prepared to meet June distribution expectations. Upcoming visits to Al Muthanna and Wasit Governorates are planned to monitor distribution progress. DART cooperative-agreement partner CARE visited Al Hillah on 29 May to share its proposed water and sanitation implementation plans, including a proposal to make emergency repairs on a water treatment system in Al Hillah that serves 750,000 people.

2. DART Field Team West conducted a follow-up visit on 28 May to a mass gravesite near Al Hillah to observe exhumation processes, meet with a new human rights organization, and update civil-military officers. Civil Affairs (CA) officers in Al Hillah reported on 27 May that a local newspaper reporter was bludgeoned to death allegedly by a pro-Saddam group that left a note warning locals against working with the Coalition. End Summary.

FOOD

3. Progress on several public distribution system (PDS) issues in Al Hillah are nearing resolution. Once resolved, the DART believes that the June distribution will be more efficient. The DART has facilitated an arrangement between the civil-military operations center (CMOC) security representatives and the Ministry of Trade (MOT) silo and warehouse management to include MOT security personnel in a four-day police and security guard training program. The MOT has prepared the list of names of its personnel and will submit the list to the CMOC. It is hoped that some of the MOT security guards will be included in the 1 June class.

4. The DART has arranged for the CMOC to review a MOT inventory list of missing or damaged items at the warehouse facility for possible replacement. According to the CMOC, the validated items would be replaced or repaired. Coalition forces had occupied portions of the warehouse grounds until about 10 days ago.

5. The DART has notified the CMOC that some MOT warehouse personnel have not received their USD 20 emergency payments. CMOC will begin distributions of the USD 20 payments as soon as MOT submits its list.

6. The DART has arranged for the issuance of a letter from a Coalition commander in Babil Governorate to the MOT silo manager stating that silo management has the authority to purchase spare parts without requesting approval from the Al Hillah governor's office. This authority will expedite any repairs needed during food arrivals and deliveries at the silo, thus preventing work stoppage during high volume periods.

7. As reported previously, the Governorates of Babil, Karbala, An Najaf and Al Qadisiyah are prepared for the planned 1 June start date for the June food distribution, although some ration shortages exist. As of 29 May, U.N. World Food Program (WFP) national and international staff in Al Hillah were awaiting instructions from WFP's leadership detailing specific distribution start dates and the planned release of ration commodities. The DART plans to visit Samawah, Al Muthanna Governorate on 31 May and Al Kut, Wasit

Governorate early next week, to better determine their food distribution status. The trip to Al Kut will serve as a follow-on visit to that made by DART/South the week of May 19, when it was learned that PDS preparations were clearly behind the other southern governorates and concerns about aflatoxin levels in the wheat currently in the silos were raised. The DART has no new information on PDS status in Al Anbar Governorate, particularly in the Ar Ramadi area.

18. WFP/Al Hillah said public announcements on local television have announced that non-registered public-distribution system beneficiaries should go to the registration center in Al Hillah and register for the June ration.

19. A recent 28,000 metric ton (MT) delivery of Russian wheat (pre-war Oil for Food commodities) arrived in Al Hillah during the last five days. According to an Al Hillah MOT silo manager, the wheat is old and probably not suitable for human consumption. WFP said the MOT silo lab personnel would test the wheat to determine its quality.

10. WFP/Al Hillah is preparing a final stock list to determine actual shortages of ration items. In An Najaf, WFP said it was short 750 MT of rice and 300 MT of vegetable oil for the June ration. Pipeline deliveries of those two items were expected soon, but actual delivery dates were not available.

11. A Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) representative said there was a growing concern among farmers in An Najaf over the lack of information on plans to purchase the local harvest. She said a clear plan from WFP or the Grain Board would go far in alleviating growing tensions. The DART is trying to attain a schedule from the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.

12. WFP/An Najaf said it has been requested by WFP/Basrah to identify additional wheat-grain storage space. The silo manager in An Najaf believes he has found the required additional space.

AN NAJAF HEALTH SECTOR

13. Various Ministry of Health (MOH) employees met at the CMOC in An Najaf on 28 May to complain about the An Najaf Minister of Health, who has served as minister for the past 11 years. They say he is corrupt and that he forces many MOH workers to carry out fraudulent activities. As a result, the Coalition authorities will likely consider postponing the election for the An Najaf Minister of Health scheduled for 31 May.

14. According to the Coalition civil affairs health officer in An Najaf, the General Hospital suffers from the city's sporadic electrical power. There is a 15-minute delay from the time the city's power shuts down to the time the hospital's generator starts, causing potential emergencies in the operating room, in incubators, and for other patients relying on electrical medical equipment.

CARE

15. The largest water treatment system (WTS) in Al Hillah that serves 750,000 people is perilously close to failing with three of six pumps in its primary pumping station down and three pumps in poor condition. The DART visited the system on 30 May with cooperative agreement partner CARE, which has submitted a plan to make emergency repairs on the pumps and other failing or failed parts of the system.

16. The WTS optimally produces 130,000 cubic meters of water per day. CARE said it now runs at about 16 percent of capacity. Sporadic electricity in Al Hillah also affects output. The system can run a maximum of 20 hours per day, although its backup generator can only perform for six hours straight. The other two WTSs in Al Hillah produce 16,000 and 22,000 cubic meters per day. CARE rehabilitated both of these smaller systems in 2001. Other non-functional elements at the plant are the flush mixers, the six flocculators, and two of four backwash pumps. Ninety of 160 filter valves are not working. The chlorinator is weak, but is currently operable. Regarding chlorine availability, a CARE water engineer warned that there could be a shortage of chlorine in Iraq in two months because the current stocks are not being replaced. Additionally, CARE proposes to carry out the following water and sanitation projects:

-- Clear the blocked sewage system in the Maternity and Pediatric Hospital in Al Hillah;

-- Improve water supply in Khanaqin, Diyala;
-- Remedy a serious sewage problem in Kamilya, Baghdad;
-- Increase water capacity at two water treatment plants in Qadissiya and one in Dorah, both in Baghdad;
-- Repair four sewage pumping stations in Hay Saddam, Baghdad;
-- Rehabilitate water networks in Muqdadia and Baquba, Diyala; Anah and Hit in Al Anbar; and Hamza and Mahaweel, Babil;
-- Increase capacity at the old and new water treatment plants in Muqdadia, Diyala; and
-- Make emergency repairs on a compact water unit and a sewage pumping station damaged in the war in Central Baghdad.

17. CARE reported that it was in the procurement stage of its ongoing implementation plan for Al Anbar Governorate, carrying out water-supply repairs in Ar Rutbah and Al Qa'im. The Ar Rutbah project requires five generators, and Al Qa'im needs a chlorinator and boosting pumps. All heavy equipment is being procured in Jordan.

UPDATES FROM THE GOVERNORATE SUPPORT TEAM MEETING

18. The DART learned on 30 May at the Al Hillah GST meeting that six truckloads of medicines arrived from Kimadiya-Baghdad, the MOH drug distributor, to Al Hillah's MOH drug warehouse on 27 May. A truckload of medical supplies was expected on 28 May. Also reported at the meeting was that 40 tons of liquid propane gas was due to arrive in Al Hillah everyday for five days. It was unclear when the initial shipment would come. Al Hillah normally requires 100 tons per day. The LPG pipeline, barring breakages, should be running in three weeks. The Civil Affairs officer dealing with security issues said that 260 new police officers completed a four-day police training, and that 130 more would be on the streets every four to five days following completion of their trainings.

BABIL PROTECTION ISSUES

19. On 25 May, a local Al Hillah independent newspaper office was attacked and a reporter bludgeoned to death by a group calling itself the "The Knights of Saddam Hussein." According to the Al Hillah CMOC, this was the only unbiased newspaper in town. The reporter was beaten to death and a note was pinned on him that stated anyone cooperating with the Coalition would be killed. All the newspaper's reporters and printing press workers have quit as a result of this attack. Local Iraqi translators for the Coalition have also begun to be threatened, especially while at the interim city hall where the CMOC and GST are based. None of the translators will identify who is intimidating them for fear they or their families would be harmed.

20. The DART visited a mass grave northwest of Al Musayyib, Babil on 28 May with representatives from the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and USAID. The group also visited the youth center, which has been converted into a morgue.

21. Thus far, over 600 bodies have been exhumed by the community, including six women and one child. According to the local site supervisor, approximately 100 to 200 bodies are being dug up everyday. When asked if the local digging crew needed any equipment for volunteer diggers, the site supervisor gratefully declined and said what they really wanted was a forensics team to begin proper exhumations of the remaining bodies buried in the mass grave. A British forensics team previously visited the site and will begin forensics investigations on the areas of the site that have not been unearthed.

22. Exhumations by the local community continue to be relatively organized. After exhumation, all bodies are identified either by identification cards or by clothing and personal effects. They are then taken to the youth center, added to existing rosters and laid out for families to identify. While the DART was at the youth center, three bodies were identified by family members, including a woman whose husband was killed in 1991.

NEW HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP IN AN NAJAF

¶23. The DART also met on 28 May with the An Najaf-based organization Human Rights for Iraq that was created by An Najaf lawyers after the war. The organization has 20 members (two women) and its director is a candidate in the upcoming mayoral election in An Najaf.

¶24. The Deputy Director said there are six identified mass graves in the An Najaf area with an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 victims buried in them. He suspects there are more. His agency helped locate the gravesites, attempts to identify bodies, and tries to provide care for the victims' families. In addition to mass-grave activities, Human Rights for Iraq does landmine removal and awareness. The Deputy Director would like to put landmine-awareness announcements on An Najaf's television station, but has not been successful in convincing the station's staff to do so.

¶25. Other agency objectives include: the protection of basic human rights, promotion of freedom of opinion, and the collection and destruction of weapons in An Najaf, and ideally working with the Coalition military. The Human Rights for Iraq's office is located in central An Najaf in the Center for High Studies, a division of Kufa University.

DART VISIT TO AN NAJAF COURTHOUSE

¶26. The DART visited the courthouse in An Najaf on 28 May. The courthouse was looted and its records destroyed during the time between the departure of the former regime and the entry by Coalition forces. Records were systematically burned, causing considerable damage to the building interior, though not destroying it. Most of the furniture, air conditioners, and fixtures were looted or damaged. Electricity and plumbing need extensive replacement. The building is in reparable condition, but will require considerable work.

¶27. Judges held elections last week and are currently hearing a limited number of cases in the adjoining Juvenile Court that was less damaged. The DART met all of the sitting judges as well as Coalition forces working to assist in rebuilding the judiciary system in An Najaf. They all agree that the current courthouse should be repaired, in the first instance because it is economically viable, and second as a sign to the residents of An Najaf that the judiciary suffered in the past, but its spirit has been resurrected and the legal system is functioning to benefit civil society.

JONES